

Amendments to the Drawings

The amended Figure now defines guide elements or guideways with reference numeral 10.

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the issues raised in the above-referenced Office Action is respectfully solicited.

The Office Action discusses the lack of review of German patent document listed on page 1 of the specification. The listed patent corresponds to U.S. Patent No. 6 003 920 which is already of record in this application. Applicants appreciate the Examiner pointing out that the listed document did not appear to have been considered.

The Information Disclosure Statement filed February 9, 2004 (after the previous Office Action) has not yet been considered. In accordance with 37 CFR 1.97(e) each item of information contained in the Information Disclosure Statement was first cited in a communication from a foreign patent office in a counterpart foreign application not more than three months prior to the filing of the Statement. Consideration of the Information Disclosure Statement is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to the drawings for not showing the guideways recited in Claim 1. The amended Figure now includes guideways 10, which receive the respective pull strands 5. The Office Action also objects to the drawings for not showing the flexible torque transfer shaft recited in Claim 4. The flexible torque transfer shaft can be considered a part of the flexible rack 7 illustrated in the Figure. Therefore, approval of the attached amended drawing and withdrawal of the drawing objections is respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended to address the objection in the Office Action. The specification has further been amended to provide reference numerals for the guideways shown in the amended Figure. Approval of the amendments to the specification is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3 are objected to because of minor informalities. The claims have been amended as suggested in the Office Action. Claims 1-4 have also been amended to more

clearly define the invention. Therefore, withdrawal of the claim objections is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 1-4 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by De Gaillard, U.S. Patent No. 6 568 732 (the '732 Patent) has been considered.

Claim 1 has been amended to clearly recite that "two powered drive systems are associated with the flat sheet on opposite sides of the vehicle". The '732 Patent discloses a single drive device 21 located at a rear of the vehicle.

Claim 1 further recites "the powered drive systems being connected to one another through a mechanical synchronization gearing assembly". Since the '732 Patent discloses a single drive device, there is no synchronization between powered drive systems.

For the above reasons, Applicants' Claim 1, and Claims 2-4 dependent therefrom, distinguish the '732 Patent.

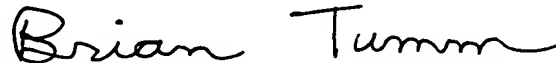
Claims 5-16 have been added. Claim 5 recites a first strand and a second strand. Claim 5 further recites "a first driving system on a first side of the vehicle for moving said first strand" and "a second driving system on a second side of the vehicle for moving said second strand". As discussed above, the '732 Patent merely discloses a single drive device 21 located at a rear end, and not on sides of the vehicle. Claims 6-12 are allowable for the same reasons as parent Claim 5, and further include other distinguishing features.

Independent Claim 13 recites first and second driving systems and "a first pull strand on the first side of the vehicle secured to said flat sheet and controlled by said first driving system" and "a second pull strand on the second side of the vehicle secured to said flat sheet and controlled by said second driving system". Once again, the '732 Patent only discloses a drive device at a rear end location of the vehicle. Dependent Claims 14-18 are allowable for the same reasons as independent Claim 13, and include other features that further distinguish over the '732 Patent.

For the above reasons, reconsideration and allowance of Claims 5-18 is respectfully requested.

For the above reasons, reconsideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian R. Tumm

BRT/ad

FLYNN, THIEL, BOUTELL  
& TANIS, P.C.  
2026 Rambling Road  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-1631  
Phone: (269) 381-1156  
Fax: (269) 381-5465

Dale H. Thiel	Reg. No. 24 323
David G. Boutell	Reg. No. 25 072
Ronald J. Tanis	Reg. No. 22 724
Terryence F. Chapman	Reg. No. 32 549
Mark L. Maki	Reg. No. 36 589
Liane L. Churney	Reg. No. 40 694
Brian R. Tumm	Reg. No. 36 328
Steven R. Thiel	Reg. No. 53 685
Sidney B. Williams, Jr.	Reg. No. 24 949

Encl: Drawing Figure  
Postal Card

136.0703